Artist Statement

I work in a naturalistic style that sometimes verges on photo-realism. My primary subject is the landscape. My fieldwork consists of some drawing and painting on site supplemented with an extensive amount of photographing. Since my residency at Badlands National Park, SD in October of 2005, the focus of my work has been that unique landscape.

The Badlands is entropy made manifest. Patterns of erosion, the chaotic signature of the wind and the rain, are everywhere in evidence. While the overall impression is desert like, actually one is looking at the prairie. The fragile greens of the grasses last only as long as there is rain. Often the prairie is a complex mixture of burnt russets, ochres and umbers. There are very few trees, mostly junipers and cottonwoods. The colors of the many types of sediment that make up the formations are surprisingly subdued. The formations, though, reflect the color of the light in the sky; consequently whatever is happening in the sky is seen on earth as well. Almost like being on the ocean, one experiences a sense of infinity as the earth reflects the sky and the feeling of space is limitless. The horizon is the still point.

In my pastels and paintings I am representing that shifting and fragile beauty. What a surprise to see these miniature mountain ranges appear and disappear depending on the time of day and direction of light. I am structuring my work around the particular quality of light present using the irregular shadow patterns to create a visual rhythm. The landscapes vibrate between a recognizable order and an undeniable chaos.

On my recent spring visit to the Badlands I had the opportunity to observe and photograph the bison. This contact has deeply affected my understanding of the environment and my sense of purpose in representing the Park. I am now interesting in incorporating the animals in my work. As I do this the focus of the paintings shifts from the formal beauty of the land to an animate animal presence.

To view more of Charlie's work please visit: http://charleslyonart.com/